



Speech by

**Mr SANTO SANTORO**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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Hansard 9 November 2000

### COOKE INQUIRY

**Mr SANTORO** (Clayfield—LP) (6.44 p.m.): Before I make a few comments about the motion that we are debating, I wish to state on the record my belief that Marshall Cooke, QC, was a very distinguished parliamentarian and is a very distinguished lawyer. He still practises as a lawyer and makes a better living than any of the other lawyers opposite could hope to make. He was also a very ethical commissioner, so much so that when the Government changed he was kept on as a commissioner. He was funded as a commissioner—albeit not as well as he should have—and his terms of reference were extended at his request by the then Government. If Marshall Cooke was so bad, the members opposite should have shut down his inquiry. They did not, and they did not for very good reasons—he was doing a good job. He is still a very distinguished citizen. He is a good constituent of mine. In common with all members on this side, I am pleased to be associated with him.

This motion again displays the hypocrisy and the deceitfulness of this Government—a Government that does not believe in industrial democracy; a Government that believes in allowing industrial thuggery and electoral fraud within industrial organisations, and by this I mean unions, not employer organisations, to flourish; and a Government that is happy to replenish its parliamentary ranks, as the Leader of the Opposition suggested, from the union movement which is electorally corrupt. Object (h) of the current Minister's legislation—which he did not mention in his second-reading speech when he introduced his legislation and on which he did not elaborate—states—

"The principal object of this Act is to provide a framework for industrial relations that supports economic prosperity and social justice by—

- (h) encouraging responsible representation of employees and employers by democratically run organisations and associations."

So what did the Minister do when he brought in his legislation? What did the Labor Party do to uphold the fine and noble sentiments that it espouses in this object that is contained within its legislation? It abolished the essential—and I stress, the essential— industrial democracy provisions that the coalition had enshrined within its industrial relations organisations legislation.

For the record, the Government abolished the following provisions—and members opposite should forget about all the others that they kept; these are the ones that they abolished—that a full-time officer or a full-time employee of the organisation or branch of the organisation may not be elected to an office in the organisation or branch, other than an office stated by the rules to be a full-time elected position; that the organisation's or a branch's management committee membership must not be made up of more than a total of 30% of the organisation's branch full-time elected officers or full-time employees; that there must be an annual general meeting of its members—not of delegates but its members; that its annual general meeting must be held within five months of the end of each of its financial years, including a financial year under section 195(2); that its annual general meeting may pass a resolution that binds the management committee of the organisation or its branches; and that its annual general meeting takes the form of a meeting of elected delegates, and that no more than 30% of the delegates may be full-time elected officers or full-time employees of the organisation.

Of course, the Government also abolished the political objects fund provisions within the

coalition's legislation. All of those provisions were democracy provisions that guaranteed grassroots control and involvement in the unions. They are the provisions that the members opposite do not talk about. They are the provisions that they abolished.

Why did the coalition implement those provisions? Just in case the members opposite were not listening, I point out to them that the previous coalition Government put those provisions in because Marshall Cooke, that person whom they are all trying to character assassinate, found some interesting things. In summary—because I have outlined them already—he found that union funds were used to pay for prostitutes for union officials; union funds were used to purchase real estate for union leaders; union money was diverted into secret slush funds; there was massive ballot fraud in union elections; there were forged signatures on ballot papers; union members were treated with contempt by some of their leaders; and union leaders made secret decisions that were not revealed to their members.

That is why the previous coalition Government enacted the provisions which this Government then abolished. That sort of culture will again flourish because the Government has destroyed industrial democracy within unions. The Government has taken away the control of the unions' affairs from their grassroots members. No amount of mealy-mouthed statements that the Opposition are anti-workers will stack up. Under coalition Governments, more workers got jobs than they are getting under this Government. Under coalition Governments, job security for public servants in the Public Service was guaranteed and pay increases were given that more than matched the national average, including averages within Labor States. That is what happened in Queensland under coalition Governments. We support unions, we support union leaders and we support union officials, but only those who are honest who believe in industrial democracy, and not the crooks that Marshall Cooke discovered.

Time expired.